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FM REO BASRAH

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0340

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INFO RUCNRAO/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

RUEHBC/REO BASRAH 0359

C O N F I D E N T I A L BASRAH 000075

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 5/15/2016

TAGS: PGOV KDEM KJUS I2

SUBJECT: BASRAH GOVERNOR WANTS POLICE CHIEF OUT

CLASSIFIED BY: Ken Gross, Regional Coordinator, REO Basrah,
Department of State.

REASON: 1.4 (b)

¶1. (U) On May 13, the Governor of Basrah, Mohammed al-Wa'eli declared in a press conference that he was suspending the Chief of Police, Hassan Sawadi Assad, because of his failure to improve the deteriorating security situation. In a flyer distributed the same evening throughout Basrah, the Governor said that he intended to suspend the Chief of Police and demand the resignation of the Commander of the Iraqi Army's 10th Brigade (based in Basrah), General Abdul Latief Thuaban.

¶2. (SBU) A local embassy employee on May 14 confirmed that the Governor had had the flyer distributed and stood behind everything it said. Furthermore, the Governor stated that he would present the issue of the suspension of the Chief of Police to the Basrah Provincial Council (BPC) for a decision at its next meeting. In a telephone call to Deputy Provincial Council Chairman Nussaif Jassim, he confirmed that the BPC would discuss the issue at its meeting on May 17.

¶3. (C) In a separate meeting on May 14, BPC member Dr. Hamid al-Thalmi told the Regional Coordinator (RC) that a vote had been taken almost four months ago to remove Sawadi from office and had received the necessary two-thirds majority. Dr. Hamid said that the decision to remove Sawadi must be submitted to the Ministry of Interior (MoI) along with potential three candidates to fill the job. According to Dr. Hamid, the BPC has not been able to agree on replacement candidates. Deputy BPC Chairman Nussaif told Regional Embassy Office staff in a subsequent phone call that there have been no viable candidates for the position. Nussaif stated that the BPC had been looking at people who were either too old or too inexperienced. The Chief of Police on May 13 denied that he is being removed from his position and said that the Governor would have no right to do so.

¶4. (C) Comment: Rumors regarding the imminent demise of the Chief of Police have been floating around for several months. However, this latest move by the Governor against Sawadi is the most serious one to date. Although the Governor is also demanding the resignation of General Abdul Latief Thuaban, he does not have the authority to remove the general. During the last month, the Governor has come under pressure from other groups to vote him out of office because of his lackadaisical attitude towards redressing serious security concerns. As a result, he is eager to show that he is taking decisive action to manage the deteriorating security situation in Basrah, and he had chosen Sawadi as his scapegoat. Most observers in Basrah believe the Governor's ploy to place blame on Sawadi for the chaotic security situation will be seen solely as an attempt to deflect attention away the Governor. End comment.

GROSS